

## Making Life Easier for Patients and Loved Ones: Meet MyHealthTeams

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By Eric Peacock, Co-founder and CEO, MyHealthTeams | Apr 18, 2013

Talk to anyone impacted by a chronic condition – autism, multiple sclerosis, breast cancer – whatever disease or condition, they will all tell you it's not easy. It's not easy finding the support that best suits them. It's not easy finding providers. It's not easy period. At [MyHealthTeams](#) we create social networks for chronic condition communities. We believe that when you or a loved one are diagnosed with a disease, it should be easy to connect with people just like you, who can share their daily experiences, and help you discover the best people around to help you.

Since we founded [MyHealthTeams](#) in 2010, we've launched three social networks – [MyAutismTeam](#), for parents of children with autism; [MyBCTeam](#), for women facing breast cancer; and [MyMSTeam](#), for those living with multiple sclerosis.

Each of the social networks we've built has been fully embraced by the communities we've addressed. Our flagship community, [MyAutismTeam](#), has in less than 24 months, grown from 30 parents to more than 40,000 parents across the US.

Emily Ybarra, mother of a 4-year old boy with autism, was having difficulty finding a dentist capable of handling her child's sensory processing disorder – a common challenge associated with autism. After joining [MyAutismTeam](#) she connected with other parents near her in Orem, Utah and asked if anyone could recommend a dentist capable of “working with a special-needs child who recoils from human contact.”

Within a few days she had a referral to the autism-friendly dentist she still uses today. More important, she had established friendships with many other parents of children on the autism spectrum. Parents nearby reached out to her, but so did parents from all across the country who could empathize with the challenges

of having a child with sensory processing disorder. She wasn't alone and she didn't need to reinvent the wheel.

MyBCTeam already has roughly 4,000 women on the site since our launch in September 2012 and the majority of those women are actively engaged on the site or the MyBCTeam mobile apps every month.

This past week we launched MyMSTeam and as of this writing we are already closing in on 500 registered members.

Users of all three of these social networks share recommendations of local providers, openly discuss daily triumphs and issues, share tips and advice, and gain access to local services. Thousands of posts, comments and updates are shared every day across these three sites and that number climbs each week as the networks expand.

Three major drivers behind the growth of our sites:

1. People crave connection with other people just like them – they just need a safe and reliable environment to do so.
2. The simplicity of our technology – our communities reflect aspects of social networks that our users are already familiar with (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) which provides for high user engagement.
3. The rapid word-of-mouth among these communities.

One in two Americans live with a chronic condition<sup>[i]</sup> and they are seeking support from not only their medical providers, but also from people like them. In fact, for women with breast cancer, recent studies show that having strong social support improves outcomes<sup>[ii]</sup>. Sharing with people who are in your shoes offers a sense of community that can't be found elsewhere – these are people who know the language of your condition; they understand the daily frustrations and the small triumphs that can mean so much.

With The Affordable Care Act on the horizon, implementing and expanding wellness programs has taken on a new importance for companies. Organizations are seeking resources that not only help improve the quality of life for their employees, but also help control health care spending. Social networks, like the ones created by MyHealthTeams, allow employers to offer unique resources to their employees allowing them to create the support networks they need to get through to the next day.

For more information on the social networks created by MyHealthTeams, visit <http://www.myhealthteams.com>.

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[i] An Unhealthy America: The Economic Burden of Chronic Disease, Charting a New Course to Save Lives and Increase Productivity and Economic Growth, Milken Institute, By Ross DeVol and Armen Dedroussian, Oct 2007 (free download <http://www.milkeninstitute.org/publications/publications.taf?function=detail&ID=38801018&cat=resrep>)

[ii] Journal of Clinical Oncology, Social Networks, Social Support, and Survival After Breast Cancer Diagnosis, Candyce H. Kroenke, et al., March 1, 2006

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